

VZCZCXRO3813  
PP RUEHDBU RUEHLN RUEHVK RUEHYG  
DE RUEHYE #0398 0940540  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 040540Z APR 07  
FM AMEMBASSY YEREVAN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5216  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0301  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1237

UNCLAS YEREVAN 000398

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KCRM](#) [AM](#)  
SUBJECT: THREE KILLED IN AMBUSH OF GYUMRI MAYOR

(U) Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) Unknown gunmen wounded the Gyumri mayor, Vartan Ghukasian, and deputy mayor, Gagik Manukian, in a bold highway attack that killed three in the two-car convoy, including Ghukasian's driver. Gyumri is Armenia's second largest city. The mayor and his entourage were attacked from two cars on the road to Gymri at about 10.30 p.m. on Monday. As a result of attack three men were killed and five were wounded, one critically. Local press reports that the mayor was rushed to a hospital in Yerevan for surgery; doctors estimate that his life is not in danger. A senior National Security Service official privately confirmed the basic facts of the incident were as reported in the media, but was unable to offer additional information. He advised us that the GOAM has established a task force of NSS, Armenian National Police, and Prosecutor's Office investigators to investigate the episode.

¶2. (SBU) Ghukasian and his party were returning to Gyumri after attending a board meeting of the ruling Republican Party, which had gathered in Yerevan to formally nominate party chairman Defense Minister Serzh Sargsian to replace the late Andranik Margarian as prime minister. Television outlets reported that top Republican Party leaders, including Serzh Sargsian, Republican parliamentary leader Galust Sahakian, and the Minister of Territorial Administration Hovik Abrahamian rushed to two Yerevan hospitals where the injured were transported for surgery and intensive care. The Republican Party Board was quick to demand effective investigation of the case and strict punishment for criminals. "We are convinced that any attempt to destabilize situation in Armenia will fail," says the statement issued by the Board.

¶3. (SBU) Ghukasian has been mayor of Gyumri since 1991, but only joined the Republican Party in 2006. His reputation has long been tarnished by widespread rumors of corruption and criminal ties. While some Republican Party officials were quick to impute an anti-Republican political motive behind the attacks, Territorial Administration Minister (and senior Republican) Hovik Abrahamian downplayed that possibility, calling on everyone to await the results of the police investigation before jumping to conclusions.

GODFREY